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LEGIONARY GARRISON AND AUXILIARY FORTS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE IN ARMENIA MINOR*

Erdal KAYA
Gaziantep University, Gaziantep, Turkey
erdalkaya224@hotmail.com

Abstract: Armenia Minor, situated in northeastern Anatolia between Pontus and Cappadocia, was a battleground for dominance between great powers like Rome and the Parthians for years due to its geopolitical significance, abundant resources, and strategic position at key trade routes. During the Early Imperial Period, the throne of Armenia, characterized by a turbulent and highly unstable political structure, frequently changed hands between pro-Roman and pro-Parthian kings. In 54 AD, the region was granted by Emperor Nero to Aristobulus, the pro-Roman king of Judaea. This desolate, mountainous, and strategic region, stretching from Sivas to Erzincan and located west of the Euphrates, was annexed during the reign of Emperor Vespasian in 72/73 AD. During the same period, as part of extensive military construction and administrative measures to secure the eastern frontier, a permanent Roman legion and dozens of auxiliary units were stationed in Armenia Minor. Its location made Armenia Minor a military base for Roman operations in the east of Asia Minor from the 1st century BCE and a strategic crossroads for the empire's eastern frontier. During Trajan's reign, Armenia Minor was incorporated into the short-lived province of *Cappadocia et Armenia Maior et Minor*, established for strategic and administrative purposes. Its significance was further reinforced by its role as a gateway to Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Iran, Anatolia, and the Black Sea, as well as its position along the renowned east-west trade route extending to Bithynia. These factors made Armenia Minor a key geopolitical and economic center while further reinforcing its strategic significance on a regional scale. This article examines in detail the legionary garrison, auxiliary forts, and military units in Armenia Minor—lifeline of the *limes* in the Roman Imperial Period—in light of ancient sources, epigraphic documents, archaeological data, and modern literature.

Keywords: *Armenia Minor, Legionary Garrison, Satala, Auxiliary Forts, Euphrates Frontier*.

INTRODUCTION

In the history of the Roman Empire, few regions were as geographically and culturally isolated from the major centers of antiquity as Armenia and Cappadocia, both situated in the eastern part of the Anatolian plateau.[1] Cumont's inclusion of Armenia in this category and his comparative analysis of the region can be attributed to Armenia's non-subjection to direct Roman rule, its geographical remoteness, climate, and challenging topography. Undoubtedly, these factors also encompass the deliberate omission of Armenia from Roman sources, with a ruler such as King Tigranes II, who was

* This article has been derived by being expanded from the author's PhD dissertation titled *Expedition Organization of the Roman Eastern Frontier Units (1st Century BC–3rd Century AD)*.

[1] CUMONT 1936, 606.

capable of rapidly consolidating control over a vast territory,[2] receiving far less attention in Roman accounts compared to King Mithridates Eupator of Pontus, indicating a deliberate effort by Rome to downplay Armenia.[3] The absence of special importance attributed to the region in ancient sources further supports this view.

From the 1st century BCE to the first quarter of the 3rd century CE, sovereignty over Armenia continuously changed hands due to the Roman-Parthian imperial struggle and military interventions. Therefore, the territories of Armenia, divided by the Euphrates River into two geographical regions (*maior* and *minor*) during the Roman period, were unable to establish an independent state (except the reign of Tigranes II between 95 and 55 BCE) throughout antiquity. On the other hand, during the imperial period, it was impossible for Armenian rulers to formulate policies over the region's territories without the consent and knowledge of Rome and Parthia. Moreover, a significant portion of the endless series of struggles and conflicts between Rome and Parthia was caused by Armenia and the political stance it adopted, which acted as a buffer[4] between the two superpowers. For the issues in the region had become a "chronic" problem for both empires.

After Alexander the Great's death, Armenia, which came under the control of the Seleucids, followed by Pontus for a time and later the dominion of Rome and Parthia, held territories both in the South Caucasus and in the eastern part of Asia Minor. Aside from its geostrategic location, the region's natural and mineral wealth sufficiently explains the efforts of great empires like Rome and Parthia to establish military control and their constant desire to keep Armenia under surveillance.

During the Early Imperial Period in Armenia, where political stability could never be achieved, control continually shifted between kings supported by the Romans or Parthians. The region of Armenia Minor, located in the eastern part of Asia Minor, was granted in 54 CE by Emperor Nero to the great-grandson of King Herod of Iudaea, Aristobulus. This strategic region, extending from Sivas to Erzincan, was annexed by Emperor Vespasian in 72/73 CE. Prior to or following the annexation of the region, a Roman legion was stationed in Satala, one of the significant cities of the province, as part of the military and administrative reforms implemented by Vespasian along the eastern frontier. Military epitaphs demonstrate that the *legio XVI Flavia Firma* was present in the city at the end of the 1st century CE and the beginning of the 2nd century CE. The second legion stationed in the city was the *XV Apollinaris*. During the reign of Hadrian, the *Apollinaris*, which was relocated from Carnuntum and replaced the *Flavia Firma*, was stationed in Satala, where its permanent headquarters remained until the early 5th century CE.

Aside from the legionary headquarters in Satala, numerous auxiliary forts were established in the region during the Roman Imperial Period, particularly starting with the reign of Vespasian. All of the aforementioned forts are currently located within the boundaries of the provinces of Sivas, Erzincan, and Gümüşhane. Under the policy of securing and strengthening the eastern frontier, the auxiliary forts established along the *ripa* played significant roles in Rome's campaigns against Parthia and Armenia, as well as its military operations in Pontus and the Caucasus, while also protecting Asia Minor from potential threats and attacks coming from the north. Moreover, the role of the auxiliaries stationed in Armenia Minor was undeniably crucial in ensuring communication and coordination between the legions and auxiliary garrisons deployed along both the northern and southern borders, as well as in securing the safe transportation of weapons, equipment, and supplies.

1. GEOGRAPHICAL BOUNDARIES OF THE ARMENIA MINOR

To the east of the Euphrates was *Armenia Maior*, while to the west lay *Armenia Minor*, a smaller region encompassing almost all of the eastern frontier of the Roman Empire. The territory of the modern Republic of Armenia corresponds only to a small portion of the ancient Armenia, which bore the same name[5] and whose significant part now lies within the borders of countries such as Russia, Turkey, and Iran.

The region encompassing Armenia Maior does not have a direct border connection or geographical proximity to the *limes* (Euphrates frontier). Therefore, the area under consideration and evaluation here is Armenia Minor. This small yet significant region, located along the *limes*, was home to a castrum and numerous auxiliary troop garrisons. Furthermore, these military centers were a significant strategic advantage that strengthened Rome's position in fulfilling supply, provisioning, and additional troop requirements during its military operations in Mesopotamia, Syria, Cappadocia, Pontus, the Caucasus, and Iran.

In the region where political borders constantly shifted throughout Antiquity, it has not been easy to define its geographical boundaries. Nonetheless, if a rough delineation is necessary, the region was bounded by the Euphrates to the east, the Scydises (Kaçkar Mountains), Paryadres (Kuzey Anadolu Dağları/Pontic Mountains), and Anti-Taurus Mountains to the north and northwest, and the Taurus Mountains to the south. According to Strabo's account, the Taurus Mountains in the south of the country separated the region from Mesopotamia, which lay between the Tigris and Euphrates, while the lands extending along the Euphrates separated it from Cappadocia and Commagene.[6]

[2] Between 95 and 56 BCE, King Tigranes II, who led the Kingdom of Armenia to its zenith, annexed the regions of Sophene, Atropatene, Osrhoene, and Gordyene in northern Mesopotamia to his realm, launched military campaigns against the Seleucid territories in Syria, as well as the regions of Commagene and Cilicia, and advanced into Persian territory, reaching as far as Ecbatana. STRAB. 11. 14. 15; EUTR. 6. 8. 4; PLUT. *LUC.* 14. 5, 21.2; JUST. *EPIT.* 40.1. 4, 40. 2. 3; APP. *SYR.* 48, 69; MAGIE 1950/I, 338–339; YAVUZ 2014, 5; MİTCHELL 2019, 134, 136–137. For further details on the reign of Tigranes II, see SULLIVAN 1990, 97–105; MANANDYAN 2007; MOMJIAN 2020.

[3] The portrayal of Tigranes II with hostile attributes in Roman sources (MITCHELL 2019, 136) constitutes a key detail that rules out alternative possibilities regarding this issue. Furthermore, according to Traina, who expresses one of the viewpoints supporting this belief, Roman historians established a paradigm that downplayed Tigranes' role by emphasizing Mithridates. See TRAINA 2017, 95.

[4] TAC. *ANN.* II. 56. 1; LUTTWAK 1976, 24; SHERWIN-WHITE 1984, 337.

[5] COLORU 2012, 722.

[6] STRAB. 11. 14. 1–2. Cf. PLIN. *HN.* 6.9; PTOL. GEOG. 5. 7. For detailed

Situated in northeastern Anatolia, between the regions of Pontos and Cappadocia, the precise and accurate delineation of Armenia Minor's borders along the limes (compared to the general geographical boundaries outlined above) is quite a challenge. The main reason for this is that the region was not directly established as a Roman province for an extended period, but rather was incorporated into the province of Cappadocia–Galatia or briefly governed by client kings. Most importantly, apart from the brief accounts by Strabo, Ptolemy, and Pliny the Elder, no ancient source providing information about the region has been found.

In this case, a general outline of the borders can only be drawn based on the marked civil and military settlements in fundamental geographical sources such as Ptolemy's *Geographika*, the *Tabula Peutingeriana*, and the *Itinerarium Antonini*. According to this, the borders of Armenia Minor, which encompasses a small region stretching from Sivas to Erzincan,[7] begin near Çit Harabe (Village of Çit/Kemaliye), close to the Malatya-Erzincan border. From there, the borders extend through Zimara (Village of Adatepe/Divriği/Sivas) and along Nicopolis (Village of Yeşilyayla-Pürk/Suşehri/Sivas), continuing through Refahiye towards Erzincan. Then, it stretches towards Satala in the village of Sadak in the Kelkit district of Gümüşhane, incorporating the legionary garrison there, and subsequently curves in a semi-arc direction towards Erzincan, continuing downward.

2. LEGIONARY GARRISON AND AUXILIARY FORTS

The strategic location of Armenia Minor made it, from the 1st century BC onward, a base for Rome's military operations in the east of Asia Minor, as well as an important area for commercial activity along the eastern border. Particularly, its position as a gateway to Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Iran, Anatolia, and the Black Sea, as well as its location along the famous east-west trade route extending to Bithynia, are other advantages that made the region desirable. Thus, Rome maintained control over a significant portion of its eastern frontier through these military settlements from a strategic perspective.

This small province, serving as an intermediary station along Rome's eastern frontier, also connected the Roman garrisons in Pontos and the Caucasus to other legionary headquarters and auxiliary forts in Cappadocia, Commagene, and Syria. Additionally, it ensured the secure transportation of supplies and military equipment from the Black Sea to the southern provinces. The powerful and difficult-to-capture military structures in the region's labyrinthine, snow-covered mountains maintained their strategic positions, which were capable of controlling the Black Sea, Mesopotamia, and Media,[8] throughout Late Antiquity. Thus, Armenia Minor, which housed a legionary headquarters and numerous auxiliary forts within its borders, constituted, more precisely, one of the vital arteries of the *limes*.

a. *Satala and Legio XV Apollinaris*

The ancient city of Satala, which housed the sole legionary garrison within the borders of Armenia Minor, is situated within the boundaries of Sadak Village, approximately 25 km southeast of the Kelkit district in Gümüşhane province.[9] Built atop one of the mounds covering the remains of ancient structures,[10] Satala's historical and archaeological significance stems from its role as a legionary fortress that, for many years, guarded the northeastern frontier of Roman Asia Minor.[11] The city, first referenced by Alexandros of Ephesus (Lychnos) in his geographical poem titled *Asia*,[12] was known more than a century prior to Rome's military interest in its location. Particularly during the 1st century AD, under the reigns of Claudius and Nero, military campaigns conducted in the northern and eastern parts of the region must have drawn attention to the strategic advantages of Satala.[13]

With the annexation of the region during the reign of Vespasian (71/72 AD),[14] the direct Roman administration in Satala officially began. From this point onward, the aim was to organize the province, ensure its security, and strengthen Roman power in Armenia. The only way to achieve these objectives could have been through the deployment of a garrison to the region.[15] Therefore, it can be argued that there was a Roman garrison in Satala before or immediately after the annexation of Armenia Minor. The first Roman legion to arrive in the city was the *XVI Flavia Firma*.[16] Military gravestones provide conclusive evidence of the legion's presence in the city at the end of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century AD.[17] Additionally, Suetonius' statements regarding the legions sent to Cappadocia indicate that the

information on the geographical boundaries and historical geography of Armenia Minor, see SMITH 1854, 215–218; BOYES 1877, XXI–XXV (Armenia); TOZER 1881, 187–188; HEWSEN 1982, 111–150; HEWSEN 1985, 60–63; HEWSEN 1988/1989, 271–319; ISAAC 1990, 10; HEWSEN 1997, 1–17; HEWSEN 2001; BUNSON 2002, 38–39; MITFORD 2018, 240–347.

[7] MITCHELL 2019, 142.

[8] CUMONT 1936, 606.

[9] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 95; *IT. ANT.* 207. 9; *RAV. COSM.* II. 12. 14; PTOL. *GEOG*. 5. 7. 3. For the location of the city and early research conducted in the region during the 19th century, see TOURNEFORT 1717, 289; TAYLOR 1868, 287–289; YORKE 1898, 321–324; CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 343–351; AKAGÜN USLU 1980, 74–85; MITFORD 1974a, 164–171; MITFORD 1974b, 221–244; LIGHTFOOT 1991, 299; LIGHTFOOT 1993, 122; KAYA 2015, 110, fn. 419; MITFORD 2018, 334–346; YILDIRIM 2020a, 582–585.

[10] MITFORD 2018, 334.

[11] LIGHTFOOT 1991, 299.

[12] STEPH. BYZ. 552. 20; MITFORD 2018, 331.

[13] MITFORD 2018, 331.

[14] In AD 54, the region of Armenia Minor was granted by Nero to Aristobulos, the great-grandson of Herod the Great, the dependent king of Iudaea. JOSEPH. *AJ* 20. 8. 4; TAC. *ANN*. XIII. 7. In the 17th year of his reign (70/71 AD), Aristobulos minted coins in honour of Titus. One year later (72/73 AD), Armenia Minor was annexed by Vespasian. For detailed information, see REINACH 1914, 144–148; MAGIE 1950/II, 1435, no. 21; BOSWORTH, 1976, 66; SULLIVAN 1977, 792–793, no. 255; MITCHELL 1993, 118; LEVICK 2017, 182; MITFORD 1980, 1180–1181; BARKAY 2007, 103–104; MITFORD 2018, 40, fn. 16, 41, 331.

[15] MITFORD 1980, 166; MITFORD 2018, 331.

[16] M'ELDERRY 1909, 47; MAGIE 1950/II, 1436; SHERK 1980, 996, fn. 114; MITCHELL 1993, 118; FARNUM 2005, 37, table D; WHEELER 2007, 243; DANDO-COLLINS 2010, 176; POLLARD/BERRY 2012, 143; UZUNOĞLU 2012, 113; KAYA 2015, 113; YARLIGAŞ 2017, 131–136; MITFORD 1974a, 166; MITFORD 1980, 1186; MITFORD 2018, 331–332; YILDIRIM 2020a, 586.

[17] For the gravestones in question, see MITFORD 1974a, 164–167, no. 3 = MITFORD 1997, 140–142, nos. 4–5; cf. MITFORD 2018, 537–538, nos. 62–63.

Flavia Firma arrived in Satala at the same time as the *legio XII Fulminata* sent to Melitene (in AD 71).[18]

The strategic importance of Satala for the Roman Empire is evidenced by imperial visits to the city. Trajan, who set out from Syria with two legions, incorporated the *legio XII Fulminata* from Melitene into his forces, marched along the limes to Satala, and gathered all his armies there to begin the Armenian Campaign from Satala.[19] While he was there, he received Anchialos, the king of the Heniochi and Machelones tribes to the east of Trapezus, Iulianos, the king of the Apsilae tribe living beyond Phasis,[20] as well as the kings of Iberia, Bosporus, and Colchis.[21] *Legio XVI Flavia Firma*, which was waiting for Emperor Trajan in the city, had achieved significant successes during the Parthian campaign and formed the main force of the Roman army during the Armenian campaign.[22]

Apart from *Flavia Firma*, the legion permanently garrisoned in Satala was the *XV Apollinaris*.[23] The legion, transferred from Carnuntum, the metropolis and garrison of the province of Pannonia Superior, to Armenia Minor in 114 AD, replaced with the *XVI Flavia Firma*. Having had its first experience in Satala between 64 and 66 AD, the legion was permanently stationed there from Hadrian's reign, prior to 134 AD.[24] Although there is no evidence suggesting participation in Trajan's Parthian and Armenian campaigns, it is likely that the *Apollinaris* was stationed in Satala to defend the western part of the short-lived province of Armenia Maior.[25] The legion, which departed from Egypt in 117 AD, later formed the core of Arrian's army during military operations against the Alans under the command of M. Vettius Valens,[26] and Satala served as the main base for these operations.[27] *Legio XV Apollinaris*, which undertook various missions along the coasts of Pontus, in *Armenia Maior*, and several cities of the province, left many traces in Satala[28] and was stationed there until the early 5th century AD.[29]

As mentioned above, imperial visits were made to Satala in the 2nd century AD. One of these visits was made by Emperor Hadrian. He visited Satala during his second journey through Asia Minor, before heading north over the Pontic mountains at the beginning of autumn.[30] It is known that, like Trajan, he also received and supported some local tribal leaders coming from the southeastern shores of the *Euxine* (Black Sea).[31] In the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, Satala functioned as a base in numerous military operations conducted northeast of the limes. Notably, in AD 161, the preparations for the battle against the Parthians at Elegeia (Ilıca/Erzurum), where a Roman legion was annihilated and the governor of Cappadocia, M. Sedatius Severianus, was killed, were carried out in Satala, from where the army advanced eastward.[32]

With the division of Armenia Minor into Armenia I (*prima*) and Armenia II (*secunda*) in AD 385/386,[33] Satala, which was included within the borders of *Armenia Prima*,[34] managed to maintain the advantages offered by its garrison and strategic location until the 5th century AD. Satala, the farthest *caput viae* of the five important strategic routes coming from the West (especially through Ancyra) was able to control the main communication arteries between the regions of Syria-Black Sea and Aegean-North Armenia due to its dominant position at the strategic crossroads in the northeast of Asia Minor.[35] In contrast to Melitene, the garrison at Satala, situated in a more advantageous position, holds significance in demonstrating the exceptional discernment and tactical brilliance of Roman commanders. Therefore, the Satala legionary garrison can be considered one of the most important and strategic military garrisons within the Roman Empire's territory. Additionally, the garrison here also had critical responsibilities, such as launching campaigns to the Black Sea and the Caucasus, as well as ensuring the logistics for these campaigns.[36]

In addition to all the features of a military town, Satala also housed all the elements necessary for civilian life. As evidenced by peacetime votive inscriptions, altars, monumental structures, the magnificent head and hand of an

[18] SUET. *VESP.* VIII; MITFORD 1974a, 166; MITFORD 1988, 168. fn. 7; MITFORD 2018, 331, fn. 15.

[19] MAGIE 1950/II, 1463, no. 30; MITFORD 2018, 332.

[20] ARR. *PERIPL. M. EUX*. 11. 3.

[21] CASS. DIO 68. 19. 2.

[22] RITTERLING 1925, 1765; SPEIDEL 1986, 658; POLLARD/BERRY 2012, 143; KAYA 2015, 110, fn. 440; MITFORD 2018, 332. According to Mitford, the familiarity of the *XVI Flavia Firma* with the climate of a high-altitude city like Satala, along with its knowledge of the region's harsh geographical and climatic conditions, made it unparalleled. MITFORD 1974a, 168. cf. MITFORD 2018, 332.

[23] For epigraphic and archaeological evidence attesting to the legion's presence in the city, see Yorke 1898, 321, no. 36, 1–5; MITFORD 1974b, 221–244; FRENCH/SUMMERLY 1987, 17–22; MITFORD 1974a, 167–168, no. 4; MITFORD 1988, 171–173, nos. 1–4; MITFORD 2018, 538, nos. 64–66; YILDIRIM 2020a, 589–594. For a detailed account of the legion's transfer to the East, its military operations, and the date of its stationing in Satala, see CASS. DIO. 55. 23. 5; TAC. *ANN*. XV. 25; M'ELDERRY 1909, 45 and 52–53; RITTERLING 1925, col. 1750–1751 and 1754–1755; MITFORD 1974a, 166–169; FRENCH/SUMMERLY 1987, 17–18, 20–22; KEPPIE 2000, 187; WHEELER 2000, 260, 268–269, 274–278, 282–285, 288–300, 303–305; FARNUM 2005, 7, fn. 53 and 55, 8, fn. 71, 9, fn. 102; DANDO-COLLINS 2010, 172–173; URLOIU 2010, 90–107; POLLARD/BERRY 2012, 166–169; UZUNOĞLU 2012, 109–112; KAYA 2015, 109–113; YARLIGAŞ 2017, 103–119; MITFORD 2018, 332–333, 442–443, 638; YILDIRIM 2020a, 587–588. For detailed information on the officials, both lower and higher-ranking, who served in the legion, the recruitments from Asia Minor, and the legion's veterans, see MITFORD 2018, 443–449.

[24] WHEELER, 2000, 275, fn. 93.

[25] MITFORD 1974a, 168; MITFORD 2018, 332.

[26] Arr. *TACT*. 5. 15 and 24; *CIL* XI 383; MITFORD 1974a, 168; WHEELER 2000, 296, fn. 217; MITFORD 2018, 538.

[27] MITFORD 1974a, 68; WHEELER 2000, 296; MITFORD 2018, 538.

[28] MITFORD 1974a, 168–169; MITFORD 2018, 332 and 538.

[29] NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 13. *Praefectus legionis quintadecimae Apollinaris*, *Satala*.

[30] ARR. *PERIPL. M. EUX*. 11. 2–3; MITFORD 1980, 1201–1202; HALFMANN 1986, 190. cf. MITFORD 2018, 332 and 68; BIRLEY 1997, 154; AKŞAR 2019, 85. For the most recent information regarding Hadrian's inspection tours of the *limes*, which formed a significant part of his journey in Asia Minor, see MITFORD 2018, 68, 69, fn. 62.

[31] According to Mitford, the purpose of the aforementioned acceptance and support was to guarantee the security of the inland territories located behind the coastal fortresses, extending from Trapezus to Sebastopolis, through diplomacy. MITFORD 2018, 332–333. For further information on these negotiations, see MITFORD 2018, 68–69, fn. 62.

[32] CASS. DIO 71. 2. 1; SHA *VERUS* 6. 9; LUCIAN. *ALEX*. 27. See also MAGIE 1950/I, 660, 1950/II, 1529, no. 4; WHEELER 2000, 197; MITFORD 1980, 1203; KAYA 2015, 112; MITFORD 2018, 72, 333; JUNTUNEN 2020.

[33] *COD. IUST.* 12. 59. 10. 5; HIEROK. *NOTIT.* 1. 227; NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XVIII. 10; MITFORD 2018, 334.

[34] HIEROK. *SYNEK*. 40; MITFORD 2018, 334.

[35] MITFORD 1974a, 165; BOSWORTH 1976, 66; MITFORD 2018, 327. For detailed information on the routes coming from Ancyra and reaching Satala, see MITFORD 2018, 327–330.

[36] MITFORD 2018, 327.

Anaitis cult statue depicted as Aphrodite, the feet of a bronze horse, plinths, large mosaic fragments, sarcophagi, architrave blocks, single-line inscribed fragments, column capitals and shafts, metopes and triglyphs, an abundance of roof tile fragments, coins, pottery, frieze fragments, an aqueduct, a winged *Nike/Victoria* statue carved in high relief outside the garrison, a bathhouse with standing vaults that remained intact until 1972, a cistern, a basilica, and numerous Christian inscriptions found outside the city walls, it is possible to speak of a significant civilian population and a level of urban life in Satala that could rival the renowned cities of Sebastopolis and Comana Pontica.[37]

It is necessary to address the legionary fortress of Satala, a city that undoubtedly owed its significance during the Roman Imperial period and Late Antiquity to the military camp it housed. In the castle with a rectangular plan covering an area of approximately 25 hectares,[38] surveys conducted in 1989 under the directorship of Lightfoot indicated that, despite the significant deterioration of its walls, it was stated that the castle could still be traced in fragments along all four sides in a manner that confirmed its rectangular plan.[39] In 2017, under the directorship of Ş. Yıldırım, excavations began at Satala, leading to the discovery of important details regarding the only legionary *castrum* in Asia Minor that has been excavated so far. In the second season of excavations (2018), traces of roads running in the north-south (cardo maximus) and east-west (*decumanus maximus*) directions within the fortress revealed that the original Roman plan has been largely preserved despite the passing centuries.[40] The first excavations aimed at uncovering the castrum were conducted at the headquarters, where the *legatus legionis*, the commander of the legion, resided, and which was located at the center of the fort (*principia*). The fact that the walls of the *Principia*, built using the *opus incertum* technique,[41] were reached for the first time during the excavations known as the C1, C2, and C3 trenches[42] has provided highly significant evidence regarding the details of the *castrum*. After the Sasanian attacks in the 6th century AD, the building continued to serve different purposes until the 11th century AD. Moreover, the excavation team has not yet found any structural remains in the castrum that can be dated to the Flavian period, and it has been determined that all existing remnants of the walls belong to the Justinianic period.[43] The full uncovering of the Satala legionary fortress, along with its existing structures and findings, will reveal crucial details about the Roman legions and auxilia stationed in the city, including their names, the military operations they participated in, and their missions along the eastern frontier and in Asia Minor. Moreover, meticulous research conducted at the legion headquarters will uncover numerous previously unknown details about Roman military logistics. Therefore, supporting the excavations at Satala and demonstrating the necessary sensitivity in the research are of great importance.

3. ROMAN AUXILIARY FORTS IN ARMENIA MINOR

a. **Zimara**

Located at a significant point of the *limes*, at the banks of the Euphrates River (*ripa*) 110–150 miles north of Melitene, and today localized in the Adatepe (Pingan[44]) village of Divriği district, Sivas province, Zimara was an auxiliary fort within the borders of Armenia Minor.[45] The *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the *Itinerarium Antonini* place Zimara between Analiba (İliç/Boyalık Village/Hasanova Hamlet) and Sabus (Çit Harabe), along the road leading from Satala to Melitene.[46] The fort was also known to Pliny due to the Armenian campaigns of Corbulo and Licinius Mucianus. He took Zimara as a reference point when measuring the journey along the Euphrates during Corbulo's Armenian campaign. Apart from Pliny, the geographer Ptolemy, who provided information about the location of Zimara, positioned the fort to the south of the Anti-Taurus Mountains.[47]

In the region, several settlements have been considered as possible locations for the Zimara auxiliary fort, primarily the modern village bearing the same name as Zimara, located in Erzincan's İliç district, as well as Bağlıca, Kayacık (Lordin), and Dostal. However, research conducted in the region has revealed that these settlements were not suitable locations for the Zimara Fort due to their distance from the Euphrates River, the main border road, and potable water sources, as well as their terrain characteristics.[48]

The construction date of the fort, based on a Latin inscription found at Pağnik Öreni, points to the period of Domitian, according to Mitford.[49] However, it is highly likely that it was constructed either before or after the Armenian campaign of the successful commander Corbulo, who was deployed to the region during the reign of Nero. Moreover, the fort's strategic location implies that it may have been utilized, either temporarily or permanently, for controlling road and river crossings, as well as serving as a waystation, during the reigns of King Tigranes II of Armenia and King

[37] TAYLOR 1868, 287–289; YORKE 1896a, 459–461; CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 342–351; MITFORD 1974a, 164–171; MITFORD 1974b, 221–244; LIGHTFOOT 1993, 124; LIGHTFOOT 1991, 299–309; LIGHTFOOT 1992, 289–297; DİKMEN/TORUK 2015, 12–35; MITFORD 2018, 334–346; YILDIRIM 2019, 429–436; YILDIRIM 2020b, 231–242.

[38] LIGHTFOOT 1991, 300; LIGHTFOOT 1998, 278; MITFORD 2018, 334, cf. YILDIRIM 2020b, 231; YILDIRIM 2020a, 590.

[39] LIGHTFOOT 1998, 278.

[40] YILDIRIM 2020b, 231; YILDIRIM 2020a, 590–592.

[41] A type of Roman masonry technique in which parallel stones, rubble, or bricks are stacked in successive rows, with mortar filling the irregular joints between them. For further details, see. Vitr. 2. 8. 1–2.

[42] The excavations in the *castrum* have brought to light numerous bronze folles dated to the 10th–11th centuries AD, a Middle Byzantine funerary inscription, as well as ceramic, glass, and metal finds, a *ballista* head, and most notably, numerous bricks and roof tiles stamped with the mark of *Legio XV Apollinaris*. YILDIRIM 2020b, 231–233; YILDIRIM 2020a, 590–594.

[43] CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 345; CROW 1986, 84; YILDIRIM 2020b, 231; YILDIRIM 2020a, 590.

[44] For the researchers who visited the region in the late 19th century and their initial impressions of Pingan, see WÜNSCH 1884, 238–241; HOGARTH 1896, 136–137; YORKE 1896b, 334.

[45] HARPER 1976, 1000; MITFORD 1980, 1189; MITFORD 2018, 241. Cf. FRENCH 1983, 85.

[46] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 98*; IT. ANT.* 208.5

[47] Pliny reports that Zimara was situated 12 Roman miles from the source of the Euphrates, and 75 Roman miles from Dascusa, another auxiliary fort located within the borders of Cappadocia. PLIN. *HN* 5. 20. Cf. PTOL. *GEOG.* 5. 7. 2.

[48] For proposals regarding the location of Zimara and recent discussions, see MITFORD 2018, 240–246, cf. FRENCH 1983, 84–85; CROW 1986, 80, 83. For other references to Zimara, see TOMASCHEK 1898, 139; *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 97–98; GEORGACAS 1971, 121.

[49] MITFORD 1974a, 171, fn. 7, 172, fn. 8.

Mithridates VI Eupator of Pontus, in a manner similar to its use in the Roman period.

Zimara played an active role in Trajan's invasion of Armenia,[50] and during the second half of the 2nd century AD, a cavalry auxiliary unit was stationed in the region. According to the inscription found at Pingan, first copied and published by Wünsch, it appears that this unit, named *Ala II Ulpia Auriana*,[51] under the command of *decurio*[52] Iulius Quartus, was stationed at Zimara in the mid–2nd century AD.[53] The auxiliary unit stationed at the fort of Zimara, located between Satala and Melitene, which facilitates the identification of the central point of the *limes*, could, according to Yorke and Mitford, have been attached to an *ala* composed entirely of cavalry or to a *cohors equitata*, a mixed infantry-cavalry unit, stationed at Dascusa.[54] The region where the fort is located is a strategically advantageous area for cavalry operations.[55] Therefore, the idea that the unit stationed here consisted entirely of cavalry seems highly probable. According to Mitford, the primary duty of the Zimara auxiliary fort, situated at the northwestern edge of Armenia Maior, was to monitor and ensure the security of a small yet significant crossing point beneath the protrusion of the Munzur Mountains (*Capotes*). It was responsible for securing river transportation and the routes leading to other garrisons and outposts in the region.[56]

Pingan, with its fertile gardens and vineyards, and a region rich in building stones, allowed for grain transportation and travel via *keleks*[57] along the river route, from Pingan to Dascusa, Melitene, and Kemaliye, up until the 1970s when dams were built in the area.[58] It seems plausible that similar journeys, and especially transportation, might have also taken place during the Roman period between legionary garrisons and auxiliary forts in the region–to the extent permitted by the Euphrates. During the surveys conducted in Pingan in the 1960s, it was observed that the terraces on the southern slope of the village, supported by rough stone walls, bore distinct ancient traces. Additionally, numerous uninscribed stelae and pottery fragments, which could not be dated, were identified in Armenian graves. In addition, the reddish tiles and other findings, which are thought to have been used by auxiliary units,[59] not only highlight the Roman presence in the region but also point to military elements rather than suggesting civilian life in Zimara.

b. **Analiba**

The first auxiliary fort after Zimara, along the route towards the legionary headquarters at Satala, is Analiba (Hasanova). The fort is 16 miles from Zimara, as indicated by the *Itinerarium Antonini*, and 15 miles, according to the Tabula Peutingeriana.[60] Mitford, who visited the Hasanova Hamlet of Boyalık Village in the İliç district multiple times since 1966, stated that he did not encounter any traces of antiquity in Hasanova. However, below the hamlet, on a flat area atop a hill overlooking the bed of Kuruçay and the asphalt road leading to Kemah, Mitford conducted investigations and identified building foundations with traces of Roman-period mortar, Roman roof tiles, a small number of pottery fragments dating to the 2nd–3rd centuries, and some Roman coins.[61] This flat area, covering approximately four hectares, was more than sufficient to deploy a *cohort*. Although there is no clear trace of the fort, the findings in the region, its proximity to the Roman road, its commanding position over the Kuruçay Valley, and the absence of any alternative fortifications nearby support Yorke's suggestion to localize Analiba in this area.[62]

In the second half of the 2nd century AD an auxiliary unit was stationed at Analiba, located one day's walk- probably on foot- east of Zimara.[63] The infantry unit, whose name is shown in the *Notitia Dignitatum*[64] as *cohors IIII Raetorum equitata*,[65] was likely transferred to the east from the province of *Moesia Superior* in August 115 AD, along with other

[50] The Latin inscription on the gray limestone, copied and photographed by Mitford at Pingan in 1963, is dated to 114–117 AD. The inscription mentioning the name of L. Catilius Severus Iulianus Claudius Reginus (*PIR*^{2} C. 558), appointed as the governor of the short-lived province of *Cappadociae et Armeniae maior et minor* established for strategic and administrative reasons during the reign of Trajan, is significant as it reflects Trajan's intention to consolidate the northern frontier regions in connection with his Parthian campaign and the military activity at Zimara. For the inscription and detailed information, see MAGIE 1950/II, 1452, no. 8 and 24; MITFORD 1974a, 171–172, fn. 7; MITFORD 1980, 1199–1200, fn. 87; MITFORD 2018, 67, fn. 57, 523, no. 30. For other inscriptions mentioning the name of Reginus and detailed information regarding the organization of Armenia as a Roman province, see SPEIDEL 2021, especially 135–139.

[51] According to the *Notitia Dignitatum* (NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 22), the auxiliary cavalry unit *Ala II Ulpia Auriana* was stationed at Dascusa. No diplomas belonging to soldiers of this unit have been discovered so far.
The exact date of deployment of this unit to Cappadocia is unknown, although it is believed to have been established in the Upper Danube during the reign of Vespasian. However, the name *gens Ulpia* indicates that the unit served under Trajan's command in Dacia in 114 AD. The name of the unit appears in another source, Arrian's Ἑκταξις κατά Ἀλανών (ARR. *TACT*. 1), in which he describes the organization of the campaign against the Alans. The soldiers of the *II Auriana*, who were part of the vanguard in the battle of 135 AD, were, according to Arrian, equipped not in the heavy and cumbersome manner, but rather in the light style characteristic of classical Roman cavalry units. The reason for this was likely to prevent the limitation of the cavalry's maneuverability and mobility in a mountainous and challenging geography such as Armenia. MITFORD 2018, 477–478. For inscriptions mentioning the unit's name, see *AE* 1996, 1630; MITFORD 2018, 523–524, no. 31.

[52] The officer commanding a *turma*, the smallest cavalry unit consisting of 32 horsemen, attached to the *auxilia* in the Roman Republic and Imperial periods. For *decurio*, see CAMPBELL 1997, 358–359; DOBSON 2012, 1957.

[53] WÜNSCH 1884, 239, no. 1; FRENCH 1983, 85; MITFORD 2018, 523–524, no. 31=*ILS* 2535=*CIL* III 6743.

[54] MITFORD 2018, 241–242, fn. 4.

[55] MITFORD 2018, 477.

[56] Zimara was situated at a strategic point at the intersection of two major frontier roads leading north. These roads not only facilitated access to more distant regions via Satala and Trapezus but also played a decisive role in the military and logistical infrastructure of the area MITFORD 2018, 245, 253.

[57] A traditional type of raft made from the inflated hides of animals such as goats, sheep, cows, or water buffalo.

[58] TAYLOR 1868, 307–308; MITFORD 1980, 1189; MITFORD 2018, 243–245.

[59] MITFORD 2018, 244.

[60] *ITIN ANT*. 208, 4; *TAB. PEUT*. VIII. Route 97. For another ancient source mentioning the name of the fort, which is located within the borders of Armenia Minor, near the Anti-Taurus mountains, and relatively far from the Euphrates, see PTOL. *GEOG*. 5. 7. 4 (Ἀναλίβλα).

[61] MITFORD 2018, 257. For the initial surveys conducted in Hasanova, see YORKE 1896a, 456.

[62] YORKE 1896a, 456; FRENCH 1983, 85; MITFORD 2018, 257.

[63] MITFORD 2018, 257.

[64] NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 28. *cohors quarta Raetorum, Analiba*.

[65] The designation *equitata* in the unit's name stems from the fact that *cohors IIII Raetorum* was among Arrian's forces. Because as mentioned above, there was only one infantry unit in Arrian's army, with the rest of the force consisting of cavalry. See, ARR. *TACT*. 1.

auxiliary units, to participate in Trajan's Armenian campaign. There is no epigraphic evidence available at present that proves the unit's presence in the east of Asia Minor or provides definitive information regarding its activities in this region.[66]

The sarcophagus[67] commissioned by M. Ulpius Longus, who served as a *centurio* in *cohors IIII Raetorum*, for his three-year-old son M. Ulpius Arrianus, discovered in Side, provides evidence that *cohors IIII Raetorum* was present in the East during Trajan's Parthian campaign. According to Bennett, the inscription suggests that Father Longus may have settled in Side after his retirement or that the *cohors IIII Raetorum* may have been stationed in Side for a time as one of the two garrisons of the province of Lycia-Pamphylia.[68] The unit most likely departed from the Lycia-Pamphylia to head for Cappadocia before AD 117.[69] The *cohors IIII Raetorum*, which was part of the army prepared by Arrianos in Cappadocia and took part in the Alan campaign of AD 135, was stationed at Analiba until the end of the 4th century AD.[70] Although there is no definitive information regarding the activities of the Roman garrison here, Mitford suggests that the fort had three main functions: 1- Observe the entrance of the Kuruçay Valley. 2- Ensure the security of the river crossing point located in the lower part of İliç (Euphrates). 3- Patrol the mountainous areas to the northwest of Tunceli.[71]

c. **Carsaga**

Another auxiliary fort within the borders of Armenia Minor, the location of which remained unidentified for many years, is Carsaga. The fort is located in a strategic position, as shown in the *Itinerarium Antonini*, determining the main routes leading to Satala and the four auxiliary forts.[72] According to F. and E. Cumont, who visited the region, Carsaga is located approximately a day's journey from the Euphrates and should be localized to Melik Şerif (Refahiye/Yurtbaşı Village), which is situated in the interior, away from the river.[73]

After the Cumonts, Mitford, who conducted further research in the region, suggests two other locations for Carsaga in addition to Melik Şerif. The first of these is Kömürköy/Ermenisağ Village, which is cramped between Kömür Çayı and the steep slopes of Karadağ, and the Euphrates River. Due to its proximity to the *ripa* and the frontier road, its location, and water resources, the area is ideal for an ancient settlement. However, it is far from being Carsaga, as no remains or finds from the Roman period have been identified within its territory. The second proposed location is Doğanbeyli Village, formerly known as Ermelik, in the Kemah district. The discovery of an ancient road leading from here to Melik Şerif and from there to Nicopolis, along with a watchtower, other remains, and the proximity to the Euphrates River, has suggested that Carsaga might be located in this area. Additionally, during periods when the snow in the high Çimen Mountains blocked the direct support route from Nicopolis, the Kömür Çay, Ermelik, and Euphrates valleys in the region provided an alternative route to Erzincan and Satala, which was not at a high altitude. Therefore, for the reasons listed above, Mitford, unlike the Cumonts, argued that Ermelik was the most ideal location for Carsaga, suggesting that Melik Şerif could have been an intermediate station.[74] Until concrete and definitive evidence disproving this situation is obtained, Mitford's suggestion of Ermelik should be considered the most ideal location for Carsaga.

d. **Arauraca**

In comparison to other auxiliary garrisons, the data concerning the status of Arauraca during the Roman period and Late Antiquity is relatively abundant. The saint, St. Eustratius, who is venerated as a martyr by the Eastern Orthodox Church and is known to have endured cruel tortures during the reign of Emperor Diocletian, was born in Arauraca. *Summoned by the dux Armeniae Lysias around AD 303 and destined, along with four companions, to become one of the Five Martyrs of Armenia- commemorated on 13 December- Eustratius deposited his official belt in the church at Arauraca*. The remains of the saints' bodies were buried in Analibozora, near Beşikli Village (Ardos), which is part of Kemah District.[75]

The Arauraca,[76] mentioned in the *Itinerarium Antonini*,[77] was also an important seat of a bishopric. Three locations are proposed for the auxiliary fort and the episcopal center: Alp Village, Ardos/Beşikli Village, and Ortahan, located within the boundaries of Kemah. No ancient traces have been found in either the houses or the gardens of Alp Village. Similarly, since no ancient traces have been found in Ortahan and due to the region's sloping terrain being unsuitable for a garrison, it has been concluded that these areas are not ideal locations for the garrison of Arauraca. It is believed that the area, located below Ardos, sloping towards the Euphrates and 14 miles away from Erzincan Castle, covered with barren land and rock fragments, and measuring 1 mile in width, is a highly suitable location for Arauraca. Especially, the direct route over the Çimen Mountains leading to Nikopolis was impassable in winter due to heavy snowfall. Therefore, access to the *metropolis* of Armenia, Nikopolis, could be easily and securely achieved via the Carsaga and Kömür Çay Valleys.[78]

Arauraca, a center of great importance for Christianity and located on the strategic route leading to the Satala legion headquarters, was also notable as the location of the fort belonging to the auxiliary unit *cohors I Bosporanorum sagittariorum equitata*.[79] As the name suggests, this *auxilia*,

[66] MITFORD 2018, 492.
[67] For the inscription on the sarcophagus, see AE 1915, 49; NOLLÉ 2001, 535–536, no. 219; BENNETT 2010, 424–425, cf. MITFORD 2018, 492–493.
[68] BENNETT 2008, 297–299; BENNETT 2010, 424–425. See also MITFORD 2018, 493, fn. 83.
[69] BENNETT 2010, 427, cf. MITFORD 2018, 492.f.
[70] NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 28.
[71] MITFORD 2018, 257.
[72] *IT. ANT.* 208. 2.
[73] CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 326–328, fn. 1, cf. MITFORD 2018, 252. The suggestion of Melik Şerif for the location of Carsaga is likely related to the Pompeius Collega milestone. See, CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 326–330.
[74] For detailed information on the subject, See MITFORD 1980, 1190; MITFORD 2018, 264, fn. 8.
[75] MITFORD 2018, 267, fn. 11.
[76] For references on Arauraca, see RAMSAY 1890, 275, 286; HIRSCHFELD 1895, 400–401; MITFORD 2018, 267–269.
[77] *IT. ANT.* 208.1.
[78] MITFORD 2018, 267–268; cf. FRENCH 1983, 85.
[79] The unit's name, *Cohors miliaria Bosporiana*, Arauraca, is listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum*, and the term *miliaria*- denoting a unit of 1,000 men- appears only here. Mitford has claimed that during the periods covered by

which included infantry archers (*sagittarii*), was most likely formed from soldiers coming from the Crimean Bosporus during the Augustan age,[80] and it would have likely supported *legio XII Fulminata* in Syria, its first posting, and later in Melitene where it was sent.[81] The unit also has significant evidence suggesting its presence in the provinces of Galatia-Cappadocia during the reigns of Claudius and Nero.

According to an inscription found in Ephesus, the *praefectus* of the unit, M. Aemilius Pius, honored the *legatus* of the province of Galatia, Rutilius Gallicus.[82] The term *Galatica* mentioned in the inscription suggests that Gallicus' administrative region may have also included the province of Cappadocia, which was merged with Galatia before Corbulo's Armenian campaign. Thus, it can be stated that cohors I Bosporanorum sagittariorum equitata was incorporated into the army of Caesennius Paetus[83] in the province of Galatia-Cappadocia in AD 62. Furthermore, the cohort's strong connections with Legio XII Fulminata during the 1st century AD and the early 2nd century have been identified; in fact, two of its prefects were later appointed as tribunes in the same legion.[84] Mitford suggests that the aforementioned connections with *legio XII Fulminata* indicate that the *cohors* may have been stationed in Pisidian Antioch for a special mission in the early 1st century AD and later deployed within the primary headquarters in Melitene during the 2nd century AD.[85]

Another record mentioning the unit dates to the reign of Emperor Hadrian. The *Cohors I Bosporanorum* likely served with its infantry archers in the army that Arrian prepared in Cappadocia.[86] Because Arrianos' cohorts included heavy infantry and infantry archers.[87] The unit, deployed to Arauraca, most likely during its time in Cappadocia, currently has no definitive information regarding its activities at the garrison. However, it can be stated that the auxilia, known to have been stationed here until the late 4th century AD, provided security for the roads leading to Nikopolis and Satala as well as for the logistical transportation routes.

e. **Suisa**

Suisa, mentioned only in the *Itinerarium Antonini*,[88] was a significant auxiliary fort located at a distance of 24/28 miles from Arauraca and 17/26 miles from Satala. Although there is no clear data or evidence, the garrison is localized to the present-day Erzincan Castle. The inner field of Erzincan Castle, covering approximately five hectares, is twice the area required for an *ala quingenaria*, according to Mitford. Thus, Mitford suggests that only the southern half of the castle may have been used for the cavalry unit in the early period.[89]

According to the information provided by the *Notitia Dignitatum*[90] and Arrian,[91] the auxilia unit stationed at Suisa was the cavalry unit *ala I Ulpia Dacorum*. The presence of this unit in Cappadocia, which has not been recorded in any military diplomas to date, is confirmed through an inscription in Rome dedicated to Lucius Aemilius Carus, who governed Cappadocia from AD 148/149 to 150/151, by his friend and the *praefectus* of *ala I Ulpia Dacorum*.[92] It is believed that the cavalry unit, thought to have been established in AD 103/104, arrived in Cappadocia with the *XV Apollinaris* to participate in Trajan's Armenian campaign and may have been stationed at Suisa during Hadrian's reign.[93]

Located on the frontier road and the southern support road[94] to Satala, the strategic and vulnerable area, where the Suisa fort, part of the early military garrisons in Armenia Minor, was situated, was protected by fast and maneuverable Roman cavalry due to its rugged and challenging terrain. However, monitoring the long *ripa* surrounding the Erzincan Plain was also one of the main tasks of the auxiliary unit stationed here.[95] Located in such a strategic position, the garrison was most likely used as a way station for the transportation of military equipment, troop movements, as well as commercial and logistical shipments between Satala and other auxiliary forts. It is highly likely that it also functioned as a reconnaissance unit during the mentioned movements.

f. **Haris**

Haris, located at the point where all the roads from the Euphrates converge towards Armenia Minor, between Elegarsina and Draconis,[96] is localized in Yurtbaşı Village (Melik Şerif), Refahiye District of Erzincan. Located approximately 15 km east of Refahiye, the village formerly known as Melik Şerif *sprawls beneath a huge red rock at the mouth of a side valley in the western foothills of Karadağ*. The epigraphic evidence found and recorded from this site offers insights that validate the importance of Melik Şerif during the Roman period.[97] In 1838, the French missionary E. Boré, who was in Melik Şerif, reported that a Bey, during his visit, mentioned the existence of a marble structure in the village, which he believed could be a fort or a temple.[98]

Another researcher who visited Melik Şerif, besides Boré, was F. Cumont. In 1900, during his research in the region, Cumont recorded eight fragments of a white marble plaque dedicated to Emperor Septimius Severus by the *cohors I*

the inscriptions related to the unit- those of Nero, Trajan, and Hadrian- the unit was a *quingenaria* (consisting of 500 men). See MITFORD 2018, 481.

[80] CHEESMAN 1913, 255, 261, fn. 2; MITFORD 2018, 267, 481. According to an inscription found in the city of Pisidian Antioch, C. Caristanius Fronto Caesianus Iullus, a member of the prominent *Caristanii* family of the city, held the position of *praefectus* in the Bosporanorum unit and served as a *tribunus* in the *legio XII Fulminata* during the period of the colony's establishment in the Augustan age. For further information, see CHEESMAN 1913, 254, no. 2 (= *ILS* 9503), 255; cf. MITFORD 2018, 481, fn. 49.

[81] CHEESMAN 1913, 255, 261, fn. 2; MITFORD 2018, 267, 481.

[82] *ILS* 9499 = *PME* A 85; cf. SPEIDEL 1983, 14–15; DEVIJVER 1986, 117, no. 6; MITFORD 2018, 481.

[83] TAC. *ANN*. XV. 6.

[84] For further information, see MITFORD 2018, 432, fn. 17, 481, fn. 49.

[85] For the connection between the unit in question and another *ala* bearing the same name, with Pisidian Antiocheia, see CHEESMAN 1913, 254–261; cf. RAMSAY 1917, 253–254, 274. See also MITFORD 2018, 481.

[86] ARR. *TACT*. 3, 18.

[87] MITFORD 2018, 481.

[88] *IT. ANT*. 207. 12 (*Suissa*).

[89] For the localization of Erzincan Castle and Suissa, see MITFORD 2018, 272–274, fn. 18. Cf. FRENCH 1983, 85.

[90] NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 23. *Ala prima Ulpia Dacorum*, *Suissa*.

[91] ARR. *TACT*. 8.

[92] For the inscription, see *ILS* 1077=SMALLWOOD, *N-H*, 190; CAMPBELL 1994, 62, no. 110. For *Ala I Ulpia Dacorum*, see RITTERLING 1902, 362; MITFORD 2018, 274, 478.

[93] MITFORD 2018, 78.

[94] For this route, see MITFORD 2018, 297–299.

[95] MITFORD 2018, 274.

[96] *TAB. PEUT*. VIII. Route 98.

[97] MITFORD 2018, 318.

[98] BORÉ 1840/I, 369. See also MITFORD 2018, 318.

Lepidiana, dated to 198 AD, along with several large grey marble blocks. In fragments 1–6, the name of the *cohors I Lepidiana c.R. equitata bis torquata* is clearly legible. This provides clear evidence of the presence of the aforementioned auxilia consisting of both cavalry and infantry, in Armenia Minor in 198 AD. Moreover, the full name of the auxilia mentioned in the inscription was first found on the votive plate in question, discovered at Melik Şerif. The *cohors I Lepidiana*, which is thought to have participated in Trajan's Armenian campaign, must have been stationed in Cappadocia from the second half of the 2nd century until the late 4th century. From this date onwards, the unit was stationed at Caene-Parembole,[99] as also recorded in the *Notitia Dignitatum*.[100] The *Lepidiana* auxiliary unit likely arrived at Haris, a highly strategic location at the intersection of the main frontier road leading to Satala and the southern road (also known as the winter support road), towards the end of the 2nd century AD.[101]

Another significant epigraphic document, considered evidence of Haris' importance during the Roman period, is the Pompeius Collega milestone. The milestone, found in a shallow valley about an hour's distance above Yurtbaşı Village and dated to AD 76 (Vespasian's reign), was first recorded by Boré in 1838. Cn. Pompeius Collega, mentioned on the milestone, was the first known governor of the province of *Cappadocia-Galatia*, and during his tenure, road construction and repair activities in the region intensified. There is no doubt that the Collega milestone is related to the main frontier road leading to Satala. The document also clearly demonstrates the importance given to the fortification of the northerly direction of the *limes* and the organization of the frontier road just four years after the annexation of Armenia Minor. The distance (3) on the milestone was most likely calculated from Melik Şerif. That is, the milestone marked the route to Nikopolis to the west and to Satala to the east. Furthermore, during the reign of Vespasian, when the eastern frontier was organized, the milestone, which provides significant clues regarding the construction of roads in Armenia Minor, is of particular importance as it offers concrete evidence related to the frontier road leading to Satala.[102]

According to Mitford, who visited Melik Şerif several times between 1965 and 2006, although no trace or remains of any structure were found, there is no doubt that Haris, a significant location in Armenia Minor, was an auxiliary fort. The fort, which played a significant role in controlling the routes coming from the Euphrates, most likely served during the Roman period to ensure the security and control of movements along the southbound support road from Nicopolis or passages along the frontier road leading to Satala through the Çimen Mountains.[103]

4. OTHER AUXILIARY FORTS IN ARMENIA MINOR

Apart from the auxiliary forts mentioned above, despite the lack of specific information in ancient literature and concrete data from the frontier provinces regarding their purposes, it is believed that many intermediary stations and fortresses during the Roman period were responsible for ensuring the security of trade routes in the region, facilitating the safe transportation of military supplies and troops, and overseeing the safety of both the main frontier road and secondary routes. The forts/locations in question, particularly those known from the *Tabula Peutingeriana* and the *Itinerarium Antonini*, can be listed as follows:

1. Sinervas, located on the southern slopes of Gülendağı within the borders of Erzincan, and, although not certain, localized to the area known as Ihtik.[104]

2. Caleorsissa, located between Analiba and Oleoberda, and localized to the modern-day Uyanık Village (Babsu) in the Imranlı district of Sivas.[105]

3. Oleoberda, located between Caleorsissa and Nicopolis and localized to Aşağıboğaz (Girigizir) or Kılıçlar Village in the Imranlı district.[106]

4. Bubalia, located between Zimara and Elegarsina and localized to the area around the Şeyh Hasan Baba Türbesi near the villages of Kuruçay, Armudan/Armutlu (Ladana/Dalana), or Balkaya in the İliç district, with its strategic position on both the connecting road to Nicopolis and the main frontier road leading to Satala.[107]

5. Elegarsina, located near the foothills of the Sinibeli/Sünebeli Pass between the İliç and Refahiye districts and localized to the village of Koçkaya (Mezrahan) in the Refahiye district.[108]

6. Chorsabia, located in the central part of Armenia Minor, dominating the Refahiye Plain, and localized to Başgercenis (Refahiye/Kadıköy), which was the administrative center during the Ottoman era.[109]

7. Ad Dracones Fort, located at an altitude of approximately 2100 meters in Çimen Plateau, within the borders of Gümüşhane, surrounded by mountains and likely active only during the summer months.[110]

8. Cunissa, located in Balahor, at an altitude of 1830 meters and approximately three hours from Çimen Plateau, within the borders of Gümüşhane, and one of the three fortresses located between Draconis and Satala.[111]

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[99] Mitford states that the challenges of the narrow coastal strip were not suitable for a *cohors equitata*. Therefore, he argued that the garrison of *cohors I Lepidiana* could not be located at Caene-Parembole on the Pontic coast; thus, the unit's new camp should be sought within the boundaries of *Armenia Prima*. See MITFORD 2018, 494.

[100] NOT. DIGN. *OR*. XXXVIII. 35.

[101] For detailed information on the fragmentary inscriptions found at Melik Şerif and the *cohors I Lepidiana*, see CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 327; CUMONT 1907, 552–554 (=*AE* 1908, 22); MITFORD 2018, 318, 494, 534–535, nos. 56–57.

[102] For further information on the Pompeius Collega milestone and the portion of the roads constructed along the eastern frontier in Armenia Minor during Vespasian's reign, see BORÉ 1840/I, 369; cf. *CIL* III, 306; CUMONT 1905, 201; CUMONT 1907, 327–328; cf. *CIL* III, 6050 and *ILS* 8904; MITFORD 1980, 1183–1184; MITFORD 2018, 318–320, 535, no. 57.

[103] MITFORD 2018, 318.

[104] *IT. ANT.* 208. 3; PTOL. *GEOG.* 5.7. 2 (Σίνιβρα); Lemprière1839, (Sinervas); MITFORD 2018, 261–263.

[105] *TAB. PEUT.* VIIII. Route 97; MITFORD 2018, 285.

[106] *TAB. PEUT.* VIIII. Route 97; MITFORD 2018, 285–286.

[107] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 98; MITFORD 2018, 257, 303–3035.

[108] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 98. Contrary to Mitford, French (FRENCH 1983, 87) has localized Elegarsina to a different area. For different views and current discussions on the topic, see MITFORD, 2018, 305–306.

[109] PTOL. *GEOG.* 5. 7. 3 (Χορσαβία); STRECKER 1861, 357; CUINET 1892/I, 218; CUMONT/CUMONT 1906, 324; MITFORD 2018, 306–307, 317.

[110] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 98; *IT. ANT.* 207. 7; MITFORD 2018, 322–325.

[111] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 95; MITFORD 2018, 325–326.

9. Hassis, the second of the three forts located between Draconis and Satala.[112]

10. Ziziola, located in Belenli Village, Kelkit district of Gümüşhane, and the last fort before reaching Satala.[113]

CONCLUSION

Although Armenia Minor, located in the northeastern section of the Roman Empire's eastern frontier, was characterized as a geographically desolate and sparsely populated region, it held an exceptionally critical strategic role. The historical trajectory of the region was largely shaped by Rome's military and administrative policies along its eastern frontier. The Roman legion garrison and auxiliary outposts stationed in the area constituted a fundamental pillar of the empire's dominance over the region. Armenia Minor, which functioned as a buffer zone against the Parthian threat, assumed a central role in Rome's eastern policy and became an integral part of the military structure shaped by the empire's strategies of expansion, defense, and diplomacy. Therefore, the history of the region should not be restricted to local factors alone but should instead be analyzed as a manifestation of the power balance strategies along Rome's eastern frontier.

Armenia Minor, which can be described as a *boutique province*, served as an important military base and a strategic rear outpost during the military campaigns of the Roman Empire in the Caucasus, Anatolia, Persia, and Mesopotamia. Despite its limited geographical area, the region became indispensable to the eastern frontier strategy of the Roman Empire. Thus, serving as both a logistics support center and a forward outpost responsible for frontier security, it became a cornerstone of the Empire's military defense strategy along its eastern frontier and, in this context, a critical component of Rome's eastern frontier security and defense structure. Indeed, the legionary garrison of Satala and other auxiliary forts clearly demonstrate the necessity and strategic imperative of Rome's costly and challenging military investments aimed at the northeastern frontier of the *limes*.

The legionary garrisons and auxiliary forts located in Armenia Minor were military bases of great strategic importance for the military operations conducted by the Roman Empire in the eastern part of Asia Minor from the 1st century BC onwards. The region, established for military and political purposes during the reign of Trajan as part of the province *of Cappadociae et Armeniae maior et minor*, functioned as a strategic gateway to Mesopotamia, Cappadocia, Persia, Anatolia, and the Black Sea. Additionally, its location along the famous east-west trade route extending to Bithynia is another significant factor that enhanced the strategic importance of Armenia Minor.

The Roman Empire entrusted the security and control of the northeastern part of Asia Minor to the legionary garrison at Satala and the auxiliary forts in Armenia Minor. The region of Armenia Minor, which connected the Roman garrisons in Pontus and the Caucasus to other legionary garrisons and auxiliary forts in Cappadocia, Commagene, and Syria, also played a critical role in facilitating communication between the Black Sea, the Caucasus, and the southern military outposts, as well as ensuring the rapid and secure transportation of supplies and military equipment.

The only legionary garrison in the region, Satala, was located in the northeastern part of the *limes*, in a position of immense military and strategic importance. Following the annexation of Armenia Minor during the reign of Vespasian, a Roman legion was stationed at Satala to reinforce Roman control over the region. The military activity that began during the Flavian period in the region continued with increasing momentum until the 5th century AD, following the consolidation of Rome's dominance over its eastern frontier. Suetonius' accounts of the Roman military presence in the eastern frontier provinces, along with the epigraphic data from Satala, prove that the first Roman legion sent to the region was the *XVI Flavia Firma*. The city, in addition to its military character, also increased its strategic importance by hosting significant events, such as imperial visits during the reigns of Trajan and Hadrian.

Emperor Trajan began his Armenian campaign from Satala, where he met with the leaders of the tribes and kingdoms along the Black Sea coast and the Caucasus. It is highly likely that, in selecting an important garrison such as Satala, the geographical proximity, as well as the critical objectives of ensuring the security of Roman garrisons in Armenia, Pontus, and the Caucasian coasts, and demonstrating Rome's military power to the strong kingdoms in the region, played a significant role. Trajan was followed by another Roman Emperor, Hadrian, who visited Satala. As part of his inspection tours of the *limes*, which formed an important part of his second journey to Asia Minor, the Emperor visited Satala in the early autumn of 129 AD. Like Trajan, the emperor also received the local tribal leaders of the region here and expressed Rome's support to them. The main purpose of these diplomatic meetings and support was to ensure the security of the hinterland behind the Roman garrisons along the coast from Trapezus to Sebastopolis. After his visit to Satala, the emperor advanced northward and moved towards Trapezus through the Pontic Mountains.

During the military operations conducted by the Roman armies in the northeast of the eastern frontier in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, the Satala garrison took on a strategic role as the main operations and logistics base. In 161 AD, the Parthian forces inflicted a crushing defeat on the Roman army under the command of the Governor of Cappadocia, M. Sedatius Severianus, at Elegeia; during the conflict, a Roman legion was annihilated, and Governor Severianus killed. The preparations for the battle in which the Roman army suffered a severe defeat on the eastern frontier were made at Satala, from where the troops were dispatched to Elegeia.

The second Roman legion transferred to Satala was the *XV Apollinaris*. "In the later years of Trajan's reign, the legion sent from Carnuntum to the east replaced the *legio XVI Flavia Firma*, which was present in the city. The *Apollinaris*, most likely arriving in Satala for the first time during the Armenian campaign carried out during Nero's reign, was permanently stationed there, with this deployment coinciding with the early years or slightly before the Second

[112] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 95.
[113] *TAB. PEUT.* VIII. Route 95; MITFORD 2018, 252, 326, 393.

Jewish-Roman War, during Hadrian's reign. It is believed that the legion was stationed in Satala for a period during the reign of Trajan, for the security of the newly established province of *Armenia Maior*. After departing from Egypt in AD 117, the *Apollinaris* later formed the core of Arrianus' army in military operations against the Alans, commanded by M. Vettius Valens; the main base of these operations was Satala. In addition to the province where it was stationed, *legio XV Apollinaris*, which achieved considerable success in military operations in *Armenia Maior* and on the coasts of Pontus, also undertook temporary assignments in different parts of Asia Minor. In Satala, the legion, which left significant traces, including its permanent headquarters with a rectangular plan covering an area of 25 hectares, was stationed there until the early 5th century AD.

The significant number of archaeological, epigraphic, and numismatic finds and remains in Satala, which maintained its military character for five centuries, is the clearest evidence of the city's vibrant socio-cultural, economic, and religious life, in addition to its dense civilian population, during the Roman Imperial Period.

Apart from the legionary garrison, the most decisive factors that reinforced the strategic importance of Armenia Minor in Asia Minor and enhanced its military prestige within the Roman world were the auxiliary forts, which also strengthened the defense and administrative control of the eastern frontier. The first of these garrisons, located along the *limes* and many of which were established along the bank of the Euphrates, is Zimara, formerly known as Pingan, which is localized in the village of Adatepe. Identified in ancient itineraries and maps as being located along the route extending from Satala to Melitene, the Zimara auxiliary fort most likely played a strategic role not only during Corbulo's Armenian campaign but also in military operations conducted along the Euphrates frontier during the Early Principate. Due to its location, Zimara must have been regarded as a militarily and strategically significant site not only during the Roman Imperial period but also in the Hellenistic period. It is highly likely that the armies of King Tigranes of Armenia and King Mithradates VI Eupator of Pontus utilized it to ensure road security, control river crossings, and support military logistical activities. Although epigraphic evidence points to the Domitianic period for the construction date, its active use during Corbulo's Armenian campaign strengthens the possibility that the Zimara auxiliary fort dates to the reign of Nero or an even earlier period.

Zimara played an active role in the annexation of Armenia by Emperor Trajan, contributing to the region's military and administrative organization in this context. Following the annexation, as part of Rome's strategy to fortify its eastern frontier, an auxiliary cavalry was stationed in the region during the second half of the 2nd century AD. This arrangement reflects Rome's flexible military organizational approach, while also should be considered as an indicator of the empire's relationship with local power dynamics and its frontier security policies. The auxiliary unit stationed at Zimara, located between Satala and Melitene, must have been attached to a *cohors equitata*, which was an *ala*, a unit either composed entirely of cavalry or a mixed unit of infantry and cavalry, based at Dascusa. The geographical area where the fort is located offers a strategically favourable position for cavalry operations, which makes it highly likely that the unit stationed in the region was composed entirely of cavalry. The Zimara auxiliary fort was tasked with ensuring the security of river transport, as well as the safety of the roads leading to the surrounding garrisons and forts. In this context, the unit's primary mission was to monitor the small yet strategically significant crossing point located to the south of the projection formed by the Munzur Mountains in the northwest of *Armenia Maior*.

Excavations conducted in Pingan in the 1960s revealed terraces supported by rough stone walls on the southern slope of the village, as well as uninscribed stelae and pottery fragments of uncertain dating found in Armenian graves, all of which indicate the ancient past of the region. In addition, the reddish tile fragments and other archaeological remains found in the area not only confirm the Roman presence in the region but also provide evidence that military structures and activities are more prominent in Zimara, rather than a civilian settlement.

The second auxiliary fort in the region, located along the route to Satala and localized near the Hasanova hamlet in the İliç district of Erzincan, is Analiba. he archaeological remains, numismatic finds, proximity to the main border road, and control over strategic passage routes in this area, which is large enough for a Roman *cohors*, strongly support the idea that Analiba should be located in this region. From the second half of the 2nd century AD, a Roman *auxilia* consisting of infantry was stationed at Analiba. The aforementioned unit, known to have been stationed here until the late fourth century A.D., carried out extremely critical tasks such as overseeing important transit routes, ensuring the security of the *ripa*, and patrolling the surrounding mountainous areas.

The third auxiliary fort, Carsaga, was located at a strategic point overseeing the main routes leading to Satala and the four auxiliary forts. The fort in question is located in the present-day Doğanbeyli Village, formerly known as Ermelik, in the Kemah district. The remnants of an ancient road stretching from Ermelik to Melik Şerif, and then to the *metropolis* of Armenia, Nikopolis, along with the watchtower and other archaeological findings in the region, as well as the proximity to the Euphrates River, strengthen the idea that Carsaga should be located in Ermelik. Additionally, the absence of any geographical barrier that would hinder access to Erzincan and Satala from this location supports the idea that the region may have functioned as an auxiliary fort.

Another auxiliary fort is Arauraca, one of the important centers of Christianity in Armenia. The fort, located near the village of Ardos (Beşikli) in Kemah, housed a Roman *cohors* that included infantry archers. The mentioned auxiliary force undertook critical military tasks in coordination with the Roman legions stationed in *Armenia Minor*, Syria, and Cappadocia. Additionally, it took part in various special missions aimed at reinforcing imperial authority, alongside performing police duties, such as ensuring security and maintaining public order, in different regions of Asia Minor. The available information and data on the activities of the *cohors* stationed at Arauraca is limited; however, according to the *Notitia Dignitatum*, it appears that the unit remained at

the garrison and continued its operations until the late 4th century AD. It is believed that the unit was primarily tasked with ensuring the security of the roads leading to Nicopolis and Satala and overseeing the military supply routes.

The exact location of the Suisa auxiliary fort, situated between Arauraca and Satala, remains uncertain; however, based on current evidence, it is being positioned at the site of present-day Erzincan Castle. The cavalry unit stationed at Suisa has been proven by epigraphic documents, which confirm its service in Cappadocia during the second half of the 2nd century AD. The unit most likely deployed to the region during Emperor Trajan's Armenian campaign. By the time of the Hadrianic period, the cavalry unit had been stationed at its fort in Suisa, which had been designated as a permanent garrison center, and it began to operate permanently there. The fort was located in a strategically significant area, through which the main frontier road and the southern support road to Satala passed, and it was also situated in a vulnerable, undefended, and rugged region, an area open to attacks. Therefore, a cavalry unit was stationed at Suisa, taking into account factors such as speed, early intervention, and maneuverability. The primary mission of the unit here was to control the long *ripa* surrounding the Erzincan Plain and to oversee communication and military transport between Satala and the auxiliary forts behind it. It is highly probable that it also played an important role as an intermediate station in activities related to commercial transport.

Haris, located at the junction of all the roads leading from the Euphrates to Armenia Minor, is another auxiliary fort in Armenia Minor. The fort is localized to the village of Yurtbaşı/Melik Şerif in Refahiye. In Melik Şerif, which is located in a strategic position, the remains of military and religious structures identified in the 1830s, along with epigraphic fragments uncovered in later periods, suggest that this place may have functioned as a fort or an intermediate station actively used during the Roman period. The epigraphic documents found clearly prove that the Roman auxilia stationed at Haris consisted of both infantry and cavalry. The auxiliary unit known as *Cohors I Lepidiana* is thought to have participated in Trajan's Armenian campaign, served in Cappadocia from the 2nd century to the late 4th century AD, and was most likely stationed at Haris in the late 2nd century AD. The garrison here was likely responsible for the control and security of the routes leading from the southern frontier to Armenia Minor, as well as those extending from Nicopolis to Satala and other settlements in the region.

The most compelling evidence that Melik Şerif functioned as a military settlement and was located on a strategic transit route is the Pompeius Collega milestone. The aforementioned important find, dated to the period of Vespasianus, is a clear indication of the importance placed on the region's security following the annexation of Armenia Minor, in addition to the repair and fortification works in the northeastern part of the *limes*. It is an important find that provides concrete evidence for the existence of the main frontier road.

Apart from the aforementioned auxiliary forts, there are settlements in Armenia Minor whose names are known but whose specific functions are not directly mentioned in ancient literature, and whose existence has not been concretely proven through epigraphic or archaeological evidence. It is believed that the settlements within the present-day borders of Erzincan, Sivas, and Gümüşhane provinces fulfilled important functions such as ensuring the security of auxiliary forts and legionary garrisons, overseeing military and commercial roads, ensuring the safe transport of military equipment, supplies, and troops, and taking control of the main frontier road, secondary routes, and strategic crossing points.

Consequently, all the Roman auxiliary forts in *Armenia Minor* were built near potable water sources, military and commercial crossroads, important settlements, the Euphrates River, and the main frontier road. Additionally, they were strategically located to oversee and control the surrounding roads, valleys, and crossing routes. These features clearly demonstrate that strategic factors such as security, transportation, communication, and potable water played a decisive role in the establishment of the forts. The proximity of the forts to each other and, in particular, to the legionary garrison at Satala provided a critical advantage in terms of regional security and strategic benefit by enabling rapid response to potential threats and facilitating effective communication.

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